



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Education Programs application guidelines at <http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/seminars.html> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Education Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Four Classics: First Novels of Native America

Institution: Western Washington University

Project Director: John Purdy

Grant Program: Summer Seminars and Institutes for School Teachers

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“Four Classics: First Novels of Native America”
Seminar Director: John Purdy
Western Washington University
July 2-August 3, 2009

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Summer Seminar for School Teachers
“Four Classics: First Novels of Native America”
Seminar Directors: John Purdy
Western Washington University
July 2-August 3, 2009

The Surrounded by D’Arcy McNickle (Métis), *House Made of Dawn* by N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), *Winter in the Blood* by James Welch (Blackfeet/Gros Ventre), *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo)

Narrative

Literature—stories—is the universal center of human experience, but also the Humanities.

Stories—those told to us and those we tell others—shape our identity, define our place in the world in relation to others, show us how to survive and live. As such, they are a shared location, a common ground, where people from diverse backgrounds can truly “bridge cultures.” This is why they are so crucial and central to curricula at all levels of our educational system, and why teachers are so often looking for ways to help students understand what stories carry in them and how one may be enriched by recognizing their significance and learning what they have to tell us.

This is also why Native American authors have for generations produced stories to express who they are and what has shaped their experience, and their thinking. From a night of storytelling in McNickle’s 1936 novel, to the story of the Bahkush in Momaday’s Pulitzer Prize winning novel, to the unnamed protagonist’s sudden (and forceful) realization of self through Yellow Calf’s story in Welch’s *Winter* and to the inscription in the opening pages of Leslie Silko’s first novel—“You don’t have anything/if you don’t have the stories”—storytelling is prominent. However, as Thomas King notes in his wonderful collection of essays, *The Truth About Stories*, there are myriad ways for the telling.

The goal of this five-week seminar is to examine, closely and in great detail, four classic Native American novels in the contexts of the cultures they explore, the canons of the authors who produced them, and the critical studies that have attempted to address them. These four “firsts”—the first novels written by McNickle, Momaday, Welch and Silko—represent the achievements of fledgling writers from very different backgrounds and experiences who faced very similar artistic and rhetorical challenges when they chose to write a novel. Each, in turn, provided noteworthy contributions to American literatures, in general, and collectively have come to represent a definitive core for the rapidly expanding canon of American Indian fiction. As participant educators move through the weeks of the seminar, they will engage significant works of this canon, develop methodologies for the presentation of them in their courses and careers, and extend their understanding to more recent works by Native authors, thus expanding their repertoire of teaching materials.

Looking at the initial novels of these prominent writers allows us to discuss their contributions in the context of an “emergent” written literature, a literary phenomenon of distinct character since the 1970s. Moreover, by enlightening our critical reactions to the texts with ethnographic materials from the cultures they explore, we will better comprehend the writers’ intriguing and innovative means of artistic expression: their shared concerns but also unique voices. In other words, we will consider their narratives as intermediary points between/among cultures: hence the “bridging cultures” connection. Subsequently, we will also examine the ways that the novels have evoked substantive debates around the nature of cultural exchange and literary criticism; due in part to these authors’ works, literary studies have evolved in new directions, and have moved to blur the conventional boundaries between disciplines. To interact with these novels, one must engage history, aesthetics, philosophy, cultural studies, to name just

a few of the Humanities disciplines that the director will deploy. Although the primary objective is to open up for exploration the history, philosophy, etc. that this body of literature embodies, and thus to allow for competent and enlightened future explorations, the experience will also allow for a heightened appreciation of the artistic talents of gifted writers responding to their individual experiences in contemporary times.

The four novels have been chosen for several reasons, which are described in greater detail below or in the appendices, but also because they reflect a moment when Native fiction received its first major successes in the popular conscience on the reading public: the 1970s. The seminar will celebrate these novelists' achievements, but also the N.E.H.-funded conference in 1977 in Flagstaff, Arizona that coalesced and invigorated critical discourse, around the globe, about their writings. Leslie Silko attended that conference, as did Paula Gunn Allen who produced a seminal collection of essays by participants, *Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs*, from which we will read essays.

While Momaday's and McNickle's novels were published before the 1970s—the former winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1969 thus opening the door to publication for Welch and Silko—they both contributed to and participated with the other two novels in the “Native American Renaissance” in the 1970s described by critic Kenneth Lincoln. *The Surrounded*, long out of print, was rediscovered and republished in the 1970s and has been in print ever since, a story very similar to other American classics such as Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (published the year after McNickle's novel) and John Okada's *No-No Boy*. As critical activity that focused on these four novels in the ensuing decades demonstrates, they helped shape what was to follow. By reading the later works of these four Native authors, participants will

extend our inquiry into the later decades of the twentieth century, and by devoting the final week to contemporary writers, we will extend our inquiry into the new millennium.

Content and Implementation

Given the limited time we will be together, we will be directly concerned with a limited number of texts so that the participants may interact with them in depth and detail. Each week, we will concentrate on one of the major novels and use it and its issues to extend our thinking and reading into other texts. We will move systematically through brief readings in supplemental ethnographic materials, to early responses to the novels, then to the writer's later works, and ultimately to a survey of the critical responses that have developed around the novel over the years. (Each participant will be assigned three critical essays, during the course of the seminar, upon which they will report; these will be selected based upon the participants' individual interests.) By doing so, we will be able to examine the works as products of the written tradition of American novels, using analytical approaches already familiar to the participants, but then as products of a unique, Native American cultural milieu, and finally as texts that have evoked new critical discourse within a community of writers and scholars.

Some of the issues we will discuss are: how culture is transmitted and presented through narrative; how tribal verbal arts help refine the artist's role and contribute to his or her own voice; how the climate for publication and expectations of non-tribal readers may shape or reshape novels; how the authors may conceptualize their Native readers' expectations and concerns; how each writer developed, and continued/s to refine, his or her artistic abilities; and how literary scholarship has responded over the last thirty years. We will also extend these considerations into the medium of film (with film screenings at night), a growing site of interest for Native artists such as Sherman Alexie, Victor Masayeva Jr. and Chris Eyre.

I understand that the results of the proposed seminar may vary greatly, depending upon each teacher's own interests and career situation. Consequently, I will encourage participants to engage in a significant activity suited to their needs: a research project that will support their efforts later as they incorporate their experiences into the curriculum, their lives. These will be negotiated individually. I will also ask all seminar participants to take active roles in facilitating discussions by individually presenting brief summaries of supplemental readings, leading the discussion of a specific later work from one of our authors, and keeping journals covering their experiences and thoughts. Journals are a valuable resource by recording sudden revelations for future reference, discussion and development, and by providing us with a record of participants' responses to the readings and the seminar. These will be either in hard-copy form or as an element of the online "blog" I will create for our sole use employing the Blackboard program. (Where allowable through the university's licensing agreements, our supplementary readings will be uploaded to this program.)

Finally, I will ask that some aspect of our readings, discussions, reports or journals find a more elaborate form of expression—through a paper, annotated bibliography, etc.—that will add to the body of material the group will possess at the end of our seminar. These will be compiled as a collaborative text, to supplement the ones I will provide, and will be uploaded to a web site constructed for the seminar but open to the public. I hope that some participants will choose to pursue publication and I will help them in that endeavor. (As noted below, I have edited two scholarly journals.)

I will schedule weekly meeting times beyond the usual seminar hours, so that I may work closely with each participant as the weeks progress. When a longer project emerges from the discussions, journals or papers, and a participant seeks direction, I will help. I hope this type of

an approach will allow for the greatest flexibility and diversity of experiences for the participants, encourage the continuation of study and correspondence long after the seminar is completed, and provide each person with the resources for study to which I have access. I have found this to be true from my earlier seminars from which I still receive requests for information, letters of recommendation, news on teaching experiences, (and holiday greeting cards) and so on; it is very rewarding to see the “ripple effects” of the seminars. In fact, although the general structure of this seminar is similar to my previous seminars, it has been revised to include more film screenings and more emphasis on critical responses because of my correspondence with previous participants, who requested that I enhance these components to provide more resources that teachers may find useful in the classroom.

We will meet four days a week, Monday through Thursday, for formal discussion from 9 a.m. to 11:30. This will allow ample time for a group luncheon, afternoon research and reading, individual conferences, evening screenings of Native movies, and excursions to local reservations, museums and archives in northwest Washington and southern British Columbia, all within easy reach of Bellingham.

The seminar will be preceded by a visit to the Lummi Reservation (for those who are able to arrive a few days early), a few miles from Bellingham, for the annual Stommish (a salmon feast and canoe-racing festival that draws competitors from throughout the U.S., Canada and, at times, Hawaii and New Zealand). The Department of English and the director will host a casual, welcoming salmon barbeque for all participants at the home of Professor Purdy the evening before the seminar begins.

Detailed lists of weekly activities can be found in the appendices.

WEEK ONE

On Monday, after a welcoming presentation by the university president, we will have a visit from Sharon Kinley, the director of the Coast Salish Institute at Northwest Indian College who will provide insight into living dynamic cultures, such as the Lummi, whose cultural programs have become central to the curriculum of the schools on the reservation. This sense of ongoing, ancient cultures will frame our core texts, each of which addresses the same belief.

The Surrounded (1936). Dodd & Mead; (1977) University of New Mexico Press.

Those selected to attend will be asked to read this novel in advance; each will have responded and formed readings of it, and these will initiate our discussion, thus foregrounding the ways we read and reach an understanding of fiction. We will then reconsider the novel and our readings of it as “new” information is provided.

This novel was selected for its historical importance. McNickle made artistic choices that reflect those made by the three later writers, while facing an audience largely unaware of Native people and cultures. In short, he was ahead of his times. Moreover, McNickle lived the issues and policies that have come to shape the canon: he was of mixed ancestry (Métis); he was granted an allotment on the reservation under the General Allotment Act; he attended Federal Boarding School; he worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs under John Collier and thus participated in the Indian Reorganization Act; he was the first director of the Newberry Library’s Center for American Indian History (which now bears his name); he was a self-taught cultural anthropologist and honorary member of that discipline’s major societies; he was a political

activist who worked to enhance Native self-determination; and he piloted a project that brought traditional medicine together with western medical practices, a curative bridging of cultures.

We will begin building contexts with readings in and discussions of tribal verbal arts: the means by which Native cultures are transmitted from generation to generation. The week's activities will include: viewing of the movie *The Box of Daylight* (a Tlingit story dramatized and filmed by the Nation, a Northwest coastal people) to facilitate a discussion of representation—how and by whom cultures are presented to the public at large—and *Place of the Falling Water* to provide a regional, but also visual, context for *The Surrounded* since it is a documentary set in the land McNickle describes.

The historical contexts for the 1930s and the Montana Salish will be the subjects of a lecture on Tuesday morning, and this will include cinema in the 1930s and how it presented indigenous people. (In 1936, McNickle's agent was trying to broker a deal for a film version of *The Surrounded*, in color, but it also marked the release of a re-make of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*.)

There will also be readings from early (1970s-80s) texts such as *Reading the Fire* (Ramsey), *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature* (Swann and Krupat), followed by more recent scholarship from *Red on Red* (Womack) and *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (Weaver and Womack, Warrior).

These will be concurrent with ethnographies for our use in the first weeks as well: *Haboo* by local storyteller Vi Hilbert and *Indian Legends from the Northern Rockies*, by Ella E. Clark. These readings are an attempt to address McNickle's book, but also communities in near proximity to our seminar. Stories will be assigned to specific participants, who will report on them and apply them to our novel and our shared discussions. These will resonate with Ms.

Kinley's visit but also open up *The Surrounded* in ways the individual readings may not have accomplished, and this will be repeated weekly.

Selected seminar participants will present readings Thursday on McNickle's other novels—*Runner in the Sun: A Story of Indian Maize* (1954), *Wind from an Enemy Sky* (1978) and *The Hungry Generations* (2007), which is the published first draft of *The Surrounded* but also a very different novel—and these will, no doubt, raise other aspects of his vision, and prepare us to examine similar concerns in the novels that we will discuss in the following weeks. With this intensive first week as groundwork, we will move quickly into the other authors' works.

On Friday, we will visit the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, the holdings of which are extensive. This will facilitate further discussion of representation and cultural property rights.

WEEK TWO

Monday: our visitor this week will be Professor Angelica Lawson (Arapaho) from the Department of Native American Studies at the University of Montana (where James Welch taught for years and just south of the setting of *The Surrounded*). Professor Lawson's primary research field is Native American film so she will lay the foundation and contexts for the films we will view, and the film industry in general, but in particular Welch's *Last Stand at Little Big Horn*, which will be screened the following week.

House Made of Dawn (1969). Harper & Row.

The importance of Momaday's first novel cannot be overstated. It is the only work by a Native American to win the Pulitzer Prize, to date. Since the only other novel with American Indians as subject matter to achieve this prominence was *Laughing Boy* (1929), written by the Euroamerican anthropologist Oliver La Farge, *House* is not only interesting from a comparative point of view, but also, indeed, significant from a historical perspective. (Interestingly, La Farge reviewed *The Surrounded* in 1936 and McNickle wrote a biography of La Farge in the 1970s.)

By examining the novel through close readings, we will discuss the modern novel as a medium for Native expression, and the ways that Momaday adapted it to fit his ethnographic purpose. We will examine stories from *Kiowa Tales* and *The Pueblo of Jemez* (the setting fictionalized in *House*) by Elsie Clews Parsons. I will also generate a discussion of the film version of the novel, using excerpts. Reports on two of Momaday's subsequent books, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) and *The Ancient Child* (1989), will lead to discussion of how Momaday's early voice has modified to respond to changing social circumstances and this will prepare us for our study of the 1970s. The success of Momaday's first novel resulted in a renewed interest at Harper & Row—one of the country's largest publishing houses at the time—for a series of novels, which included James Welch's first novel.

WEEK THREE

Monday: our visitor will be Professor Gordon Henry, Jr. (Anishinaabe), Director of The Native American Institute Michigan State University. Professor Henry's first novel, *The Light People*, addresses many of the issues that will be in play during this week as well as the others—identity, the effects of family history, etc.—but he will also discuss presentation: how to bring these issues to a non-native audience, including the deployment of humor.

Winter in the Blood (1974). Harper & Row.

The critical response to James Welch's first novel was immediate, and revealing. This is understandable. Unlike *House Made of Dawn*, *Winter* does not seem to be overly concerned with its own "Indianness," as one critic calls it (although it is most definitely a core text in this canon). Instead, it appears to emerge from and co-opt the novel of alienation, but unlike the marginalized protagonists in other works, Welch's finds a tentative resolution, and it centers upon his growing awareness of his "roots," his ethnic identity defined by a specific geographical landscape, family, and community. This is also an element of Henry's novel.

Ethnographic resources for the week will include *The Sun Came Down: The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*, by Percy Bullchild, and two other ethnographies by non-Native authors (Grinnell and McClintock); with these, we will find how Welch subtly structures his novel along traditional Blackfeet lines, and underscores ancient patterns of movement and behavior. The participant presentations will address his second novel, *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979), his historical novel *Fools Crow* (1986), and his last novel, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* (2003).

Other resources will include Lois Welch's book about her late husband (due for release soon), and, hopefully, a film version of the novel (which is under way, but without a firm completion date).

WEEK FOUR

Ceremony (1977) Viking.

Leslie Marmon Silko's first novel continues to draw critics and other fans from around the globe. Like McNickle, she creates an imaginative construction, a site, for understanding the nature of storytelling; like Momaday, she emphasizes the innate power of language and place to convey identity and to heal; and like Welch she presents a protagonist lost and wandering along a modern American highway looking for self. And he finds himself in the old stories that are the basis of all literature and an understanding of the present.

We will explore her sense of a storyteller in two ways: by examining the traditional stories from which she drew her characters and plots, and by considering her other works. We will use two ethnographic sources, *Keresan Texts* (Boas) and *Schat-chen: Histories, Traditions and Narratives of the Quweres Indians of Laguna and Acoma* (Gunn). Presentations will cover her second book, *Storyteller* (1981), and the novels *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) and *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999); there will be short readings from her new book, *The Turquoise Ledge: A Memoir* (2010).

Thursday: our visitor this week will be Professor D.L. Birchfield (Choctaw) from the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, who will discuss Native writers and popular genres. Birchfield's first novel, *Field of Honor*, is a blend of the genres of returning Vietnam veteran and science fiction/fantasy; his second novel, *Black Silk Handkerchief*, is a mystery novel. He will thus provide a transition from our four classics to the expansive canon that has emerged from them, including the work of the contemporary authors to be discussed in our final week.

WEEK FIVE

Native Fiction Today

While reviewing the later works of the central four authors brings our study into relative contemporary times, we will use the last week to survey the wide array of other voices and other visions that have come to shape or are reshaping this body of literature. Many of these authors owe a great deal to the four central authors of our seminar, and we will discover these resonances as we progress, yet they also have produced works that extend and challenge the art and conventions of the canon as well. This is the way canons take shape and evolve.

Since only eleven participants will have read and presented a later work by our four authors we will ask the remaining five to read and present the first novels of other writers: Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, Eric Gansworth's *Indian Summers*, and Sherman Alexie's *Reservation Blues* and Debra Magpie Earling's *Perma Red*, and D.L. Birchfield's *Field of Honor* which will return us—in circular fashion—to the Flathead Reservation of McNickle's novel. All participants, however, will read selected works of short fiction by authors such as Linda Hogan, Louis Owens, A.A. Carr and Gerald Vizenor. (We will also go through the archives of my online magazine as a group.) The authors for the short readings will be chosen once the director has a sense of the participants and their needs.

Project Director

Professor Purdy began his experiences with Native fiction in the decade under study: the 1970s. He studied with Montana Walking Bull—an American Indian scholar, educator and writer—and the Cherokee scholar Jack Davis. His first critical study was *Word Ways: The Novels of D’Arcy McNickle* and his most recent is *Writing Indian, Native Conversations* in which he has interviews with Paula Gunn Allen, Simon Ortiz, Louis Owens, Gerald Vizenor, and Sherman Alexie. Moreover, his own first novel, *Riding Shotgun into the Promised Land*, was published on March 1st.

John has taught on several reservations, including courses on the Warm Springs for students who were training to become teachers, and others who were training to become creative writers, and later the Lummi Reservation. He has also offered numerous undergraduate and graduate seminars, both here and abroad, on Native literatures.

John has an extensive international network, which has helped former participants to study abroad. In 2001, he won the “Writer of the Year” Award from the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers for his book, *Nothing But the Truth: An Anthology of Native American Literatures* from Prentice Hall. He has published two books on the novelist D’Arcy McNickle, whose first novel is one of the four core texts for the seminar. He has published several articles on the three other core novelists as well. His most recent endeavor was the creation of an online magazine of works by Native authors, *Native Literatures: Generations* (www.nativeliteratures.com) designed to showcase “new” authors alongside established writers, and to generate funds to help support authors with grants and awards.

For seven years, he edited *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, a scholarly quarterly and currently the only journal devoted solely to this area of study. He has served on the Advisory

Board for the journal *Profession* for the Modern Language Association and for four years he edited *The American Review of Canadian Studies*.

Participant Selection

The selection committee will be comprised of the director, a former N.E.H. seminar director (on campus), and local former seminar participant who is a high school teacher. Following the N.E.H. guidelines and criteria, there will be an effort to bring together a diverse group of participants that cuts across the various demographics of the country—geographies, generations, classes and cultures—as well as provide for a diversity of backgrounds. Ideally, the participants will represent educators “new” to the profession, including but not limited to only the two graduate students, but also others who possess a wealth of experience. I hope for a true dialog from all our country’s communities, and to promote an exchange between participants that extends well beyond the scheduled activities and endures long after the institute has ended. I am looking for enthusiastic and curious scholars and educators willing to engage in a thoughtful and dynamic exchange of ideas and “readings” of the novels.

Professional Development for Participants

Although Western Washington University (under state mandates) does not allow credit for participants who are not registered students, the director will certainly provide the documentation necessary for participants to seek C.E.U.s in their districts or states. This will include a schedule of activities and the vita of the director, but also an evaluation of the equivalency of participation with that in our Masters program. The seminar is approximately (depending upon the scope of each participant’s project) the equivalent of a five-credit graduate seminar.

Institutional Context: Western Washington University

Western is one of three state-supported regional comprehensive universities in Washington. Stressing the liberal arts and offering bachelors and masters degrees, it enrolls about 15,000 students. The Wilson and Haggard Hall libraries house over almost a million volumes of books and periodicals, more than 1,000,000 microforms, and a large collection of government documents and audio-visual materials. There are extensive electronic resources available, and rapid delivery of articles and books under a regional agreement. The library provides open stacks, which will be readily accessible to participants as visiting scholars; more specialized materials will be placed on reserve or in our seminar room for our meetings or uploaded to our Blackboard site. The English Department maintains computer writing laboratories and has within it three computer rooms, all of which will be available to participants, who will be considered “visiting scholars” with full privileges. They may also check out laptops from Wilson Library.

The University has agreed to provide several housing options for participants (all directed, oddly enough, by John Purdie): apartments, with linens and cooking facilities, and single or double dormitory rooms. In each option, the rooms are fully furnished. Housing will be available in several buildings, including the renovated Edens Hall (overlooking the 38-acre arboretum) and Birnam Woods: the apartment-style residence for those who prefer a non-dorm atmosphere. All of these are on campus in a park-like setting bordering our arboretum and only a few minutes’ walk from the library and English Department. A variety of dining options will also be available, including full meal plans.

Bellingham, a city of 85,000, provides many activities for participants and those who may accompany them, including Mount Baker Theatre and the independent Pickford Theatre—

featuring classic and art films, concerts, and lectures—numerous fine parks, miles of interurban trails, two large lakes and the Puget Sound for swimming, kayaking and boating (or simply relaxing inactivity in a fine setting), several local organizations and bookstores who offer literary readings (Silko in 1993) and musical performances, and, of course, extensive shopping opportunities for those so inclined.

More specifically, given the topic of our seminar, there are several annual powwows throughout the state during the month of July. Moreover, there is also an annual canoe journey that brings large, sea-faring canoes and their crews to shore at several reservations along the Puget Sound, with one reservation hosting the journey. I hope to coordinate our meetings to allow for a group visit to one landing and feast. I will work toward this end as soon as the plan and schedule for the 2012 trip are finalized.

Local excursions may include watching the local minor-league baseball team play, sailing to any of the 172 San Juan islands (a few of which are parks, perfect for picnics), fishing, whale watching, driving along the rugged coastline south of campus, and visiting Mount Baker or any of the numerous parks. Moreover, Bellingham is situated only 90 miles north of Seattle and 20 miles south of the Canadian border; it has easy freeway access to the many and diverse cultural and entertainment attractions of Seattle as well as Vancouver, British Columbia, one of the world's most cosmopolitan cities, an hour from campus. In each direction one will find myriad research resources, but more importantly for this proposal, numerous opportunities for contact and exchange with dozens of tribal groups.

The participants will also have access (with their identification cards) to the facilities at Lakewood. This is a ten-acre, student-owned park on Lake Whatcom, with boats, kayaks, and

canoes for use on a check-out basis. We will also have a barbeque there, in the log lodge overlooking the lake. It is a truly beautiful venue.